

May 2021

Graduate
Management
Admission
Council™

Diversity Insights

Black/African American Candidates



The Diversity Insights Series

The Diversity Insights Series offers the graduate management education community data, analysis, and observations about select candidate populations in 2020. The first installment of the series looks at US underrepresented populations, including Black/African Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans, collectively and individually.

Data and analysis from the mba.com Prospective Students Survey, plus GMAT test-taker data and external sources, illustrate what makes candidate groups distinct—from where they live, to when they begin the school search, and their motivations

as well as career goals—all in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the data landscape will help schools plan their recruitment efforts and create measures of success for their institutions.



Black/African American Candidates

In early 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic shut down and disrupted education systems across the globe at essentially the same time.

The unfolding triple threat¹ challenging the health, educational, and financial context for current and future decisions has required business school institutions to innovate and adapt, as well as adjust to the new norms facing the talent they seek to fill their cohorts.

Groups that have historically been underrepresented in business schools may be especially vulnerable to recent social and financial insecurities and encounter long-term impacts from the crisis. Combined with a global social justice movement, the pandemic has further emphasized diversity among the critical priorities for schools in the United States and worldwide.²

Data collected in the midst of the pandemic taps into the mindset and decision making for key student populations—particularly among the prospective candidates who use the mba.com website, receiving approximately 460,000 visitors per month.³ As such, the Graduate Management Admission Council™ (GMAC™) has a distinctive platform to provide analysis from survey respondents and test takers that can offer graduate management education (GME) stakeholders information to meet the challenges of creating more effective and meaningful planning, marketing, and designs for student engagement.

About This Data

This brief compiles data from GMAT™ examinees and the mba.com Prospective Students Survey to help graduate business schools plan and execute diversity recruitment initiatives.

Sections include:

- Connecting with African American Candidates
- Educational Attainment and Business Studies
- Study Formats
- Work Experience & Skills
- Financing Plans
- Population and Geography
- Demographic Profile

¹UN News. Human development backslides, education at global levels 'not seen since the 1980s'. Retrieved May 16, 2021 from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1064542>

²Ethier, Marc. (2021, February 22). The Top HBCU Feeders to U.S. MBA Programs. Poets & Quants. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://poetsandquants.com/2021/02/22/the-top-hbcu-feeders-to-u-s-mba-programs/>

³GMAC. (2021). mba.com website. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://www.mba.com/>



African Americans are a key underrepresented population (URP)⁴ group in the US GME pipeline. The awareness, access, and engagement among the prospective students within this segment varies, as demonstrated by the perceptions, goals, experience, finances, and changing profile demographics noted below.

This brief refers to candidates who identified their race/ethnicity as Black or African American, meaning those US citizens with total or partial ancestry from any of the black racial groups of Africa or of Sub-Saharan African descent. GMAC survey research refers to candidates as Black or African American interchangeably. This analysis

does not account for the many diverse segments within the African American community, including those who are descendants of enslaved people, as well as recently arrived immigrants or their children, and other more nuanced multiracial or ethnic backgrounds reflecting intermarriage and international migration.⁵ In 2019, there were 46.8 million people who self-identified as Black, making up roughly 14 percent of the US population. This marks a 29 percent increase since 2000, when there were roughly 36.2 million Black Americans.⁶

⁴The term underrepresented population (URP) refers to US citizen racial or ethnic groups including—Black or African American, Hispanic American or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native—that have historically constituted a disproportionately smaller percentage of those enrolled in higher education than they do of the US population. The term non-underrepresented populations (non-URP) category refers to US citizens identifying racial or ethnic groups including Asian Americans, White (non-Hispanic), and other.

⁵Tamir, Christine. (2021, March 25). The Growing Diversity of Black America. Pew Research Center. Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/socialtrends/2021/03/25/the-growing-diversity-of-black-america>

⁶Tamir, C., Budiman, A., Noe-Bustamante, L., and Mora, L. (2021, March 25). Facts about the U.S. Black Population. Pew Research Center. Retrieved April 15, 2021 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/fact-sheet/facts-about-the-us-black-population/>

Connecting with African American Candidates

The motivation compelling a majority of African Americans to pursue GME is primarily to “build upon existing education and experience” (70%), while nearly one-third of African Americans (28%) are aiming to “learn a new field.”⁷

Opinions about the value of GME to safeguard one’s career in tough economic times may be reinforcing the overall commitment expressed by African Americans in 2020 for a GME credential—as a majority of African Americans and candidates from non-underrepresented populations in the United States viewed the global economy to be very weak or weak (69% and 70% respectively), and slightly greater shares of African Americans described their regional economy as very weak or weak (63%) compared with 59 percent of non-URP respondents.

The perceived worth of a GME degree in the workforce holds up, as a slightly greater share of African Americans indicated a willingness to consider specific adjustments to their plans, such as online learning (32% African American vs. 26% non-URP respondents), or similar to peers, study at a business school closer to home (20% vs. 21%) rather than abandon their GME goals.

These views may be what’s driving a faster timeline among African Americans in 2020 about their ideal timing for school enrollment, and the reverse trend for many non-URP candidates who appear to be maintaining a slower timeline for enrollment.

- African Americans aiming to enroll in GME within the next six months up ticked (from 37% in 2019 to 42% in 2020) and diminished for those planning within 7–12 months (from 28% in 2019 to 22% in 2020). There was a contrasting trend among non-URP candidates, with fewer percentages planning to enroll within a year and greater shares of non-URP talent targeting longer timelines to start within the next 13–18 months, or even pushing their view of enrollment to beyond a two-year timeline.
- When compared with non-underrepresented populations, the earlier timing in 2020 is noticeable among those planning to study within the next six months (42% African Americans vs. 34% non-URP). Timelines become similar, however, when comparing plans to study during the next 7–12 months (22% vs. 22%), as well as among those planning to study within 24 months (27% vs. 28%); timelines for the two groups appear to diverge when consideration is longer than two years (8% vs. 15%).

⁷GMAC. mba.com Prospective Students Survey, data collected January to December 2020. Available at: <https://www.gmac.com/ProspectiveStudents> And, previous GMAC diversity research can be found at: <https://www.gmac.com/market-intelligence-and-research/research-library/diversity-enrollment/diversity-in-graduate-management-education-2020>

With almost half of African American candidates surveyed in 2020 reporting they are looking to begin studies sooner relative to other groups, schools will need to review and strategize for an even shorter timeframe to connect with African American applicants. In the short term, it may serve schools to set targets for the representation of diverse talent and conduct weekly planning (rather than monthly or quarterly) and more rapid communication strategies to transmit effective messaging through their most consulted sources of information.

- In their GME decision making, the most often cited resources among African Americans include school websites (62%), mba.com website (46%), friends/family (45%), school-related websites (43%), and school admissions professionals (38%).
- Although African Americans do not typically refer to published rankings as much as other groups (37% vs. 48% non-URP), they are consulting the resources that arguably help illustrate school culture more so than others, including: official school videos (18% African Americans vs. 8% non-URP), school professionals (38% vs. 33%), online advertisements (12% vs. 7%), school brochures/publications (35% vs. 32%), and print magazines/newspapers (5% vs. 2%).
- In the post-coronavirus context, it will be imperative to promote and adapt the resources African Americans use for decision making, like virtual information sessions, networking events online, placement of e-news coverage, and innovative social media outreach.
- Additionally, formats that may not have been used among graduate-level students will now be essential to open a two-way communication and expand engagement with students, like focused text messaging or a live, quick-response online message option.⁸



⁸Inside Higher Ed. (2021). Getting Personal: The Best Way to Recruit and Retain Students. Retrieved March 17, 2021 from <https://www.insidehighered.com/audio/2021/02/09/getting-personal-best-way-recruit-and-retain-students-wednesday-february-17-200-pm>

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the GME pipeline status in 2020 of African Americans surveyed, nearly two-thirds (64%) are researching programs and actively applying (up from 60% in 2019).

Conversely, 5 percent of African Americans had postponed, not yet committed, or deferred in 2020, down slightly when compared with 2019 (7%).⁹ By contrast, there was almost no change for the percentage of non-underrepresented populations in these phases: non-URP researching programs and actively applying (59% in 2019 and 60% in 2020) and those that had postponed, not yet committed, or deferred (6% in both 2019 and 2020).

Admissions experts assert that GME programs have room for improvement in the establishment of a pipeline from undergrad programs at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).¹⁰ And, as one student commented, “B-schools compete with medical schools and law schools for top HBCU talent—and miss the early window.”¹¹

This may be one reason why some schools are creating specific deferred enrollment or early access MBA programs to build pipelines of young African American and URP talent with a future-oriented date for enrollment. The early admit programs allow students in their final year of undergraduate studies who have not previously had professional full-time work experience to apply for deferred enrollment to the full-time MBA. Students can potentially secure a place in the class two years out from the time they apply, with the option to extend to three or four years. The HBS 2+2 is a notable example of a deferred enrollment program, specifically citing a preference to admit those from four categories of “high-potential individuals,” including those planning to work in an operating company (tech, manufacturing, etc.), first generation in college, and those from low socio-economic backgrounds, going into a technically demanding role or pursuing entrepreneurship.¹² Some early talent programs encourage future African American and URP talent to take risk and explore non-traditional career paths. These programs are explicit about challenging candidates to get out of the “safe zone” of traditional job tracks and explore areas they feel passionate about (one example is the Haas Accelerated Access option at the University of California, Berkeley); as well as offering structured communications that may nurture the students with annual check-ins and early community building in the years leading up to their MBA enrollment.¹³

⁹GMAC. mba.com Prospective Students Survey. Data prior to 2020 among students about deferment specifically is not available, as this was a new item detail added to 2020 questionnaire separate from status of postponed or not yet committed. Available at: <https://www.gmac.com/ProspectiveStudents>

¹⁰Thomas, Patrick. (2020, June 17). A Decade-Long Stall for Black Enrollment in M.B.A. Programs. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-decade-long-stall-for-black-enrollment-in-m-b-a-programs-11592393431>

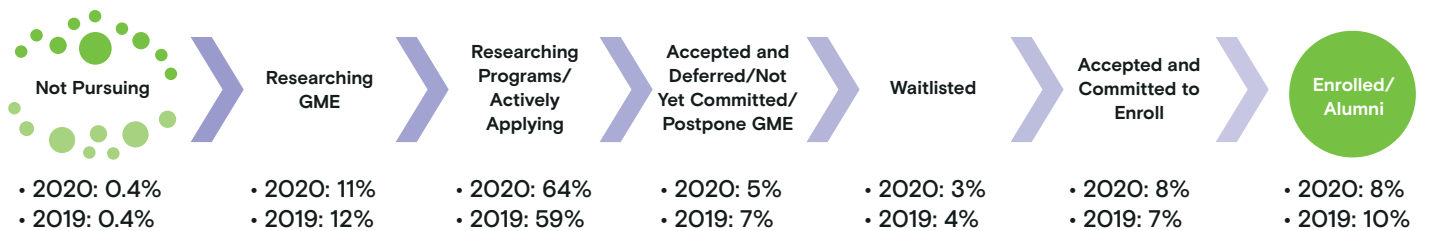
¹¹Byrne, John. (2021, February 22). The Top HBCU Feeders to U.S. MBA Programs. Poets & Quants. Retrieved on March 24, 2021 from <https://poetsandquants.com/2021/02/22/the-top-hbcu-feeders-to-u-s-mba-programs/>

¹²Silverman, Judith. (2021, January 26). How to Secure Deferred MBA Admissions At The Top 8 Programs. Poets & Quants. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://poetsandquants.com/2021/01/26/how-to-secure-deferred-mba-admission-at-the-top-8-programs/?pq-category=admissions&pq-category-2=sponsored-blogs>

¹³Clear Admit (2021). ‘Top Deferred Enrollment MBA Programs.’ Available at: <https://www.clearadmit.com/mba-admissions-tips/top-deferred-enrollment-mba-programs/>



GME Pipeline Status Among African Americans Surveyed in 2020 and 2019



Source: GMAC. (2020, 2019). mba.com Prospective Students Survey.

Overall, the perception of African Americans in 2020 survey data reveal that COVID-19 is not in itself seen as a barrier to prevent them from pursuing GME:

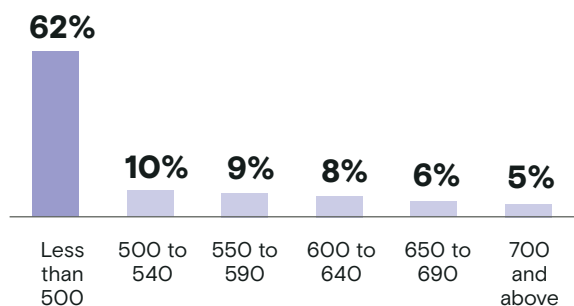
- In general, the top concerns relative to the coronavirus and potential impact on GME cited by more than half of African Americans were job market status (62%) and school closures (58%), which echoed the top apprehensions of non-URP respondents.
- 33 percent of African Americans were extremely or very concerned about the impact COVID-19 may have on their pursuit of GME in the future, compared with 26 percent of non-URP respondents.
- By contrast, about 1 in 5 African Americans (19%) indicated the pandemic was not a concern for their pursuit of GME, similar to the findings among non-URP respondents (18%) who were unfazed.
- In spite of COVID-19, similar to non-URP respondents, more than half of African Americans (55%) were holding firm to original plans about business school.

Educational Attainment and Business Studies

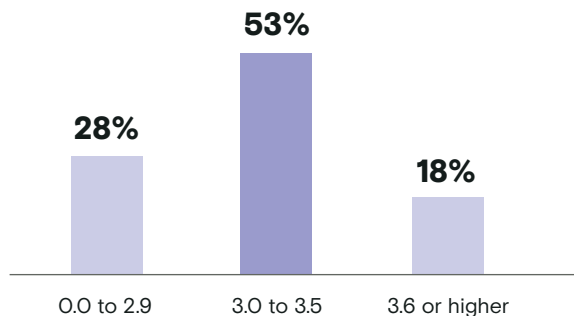
Among GMAT examinees in testing year 2020 (TY2020),¹⁴ most African Americans had already completed their undergraduate degree (67%) at their time of exam registration. Some were still enrolled as undergraduates (21%), while a smaller share of African Americans reported pursuing graduate coursework (5%) or already completed a graduate-level degree (6%).

- More than half of unique African American GMAT examinees were business majors as undergraduates (53%), consistent with non-URP US examinees (51%).
- Most African Americans reported between 3.0 and 3.5 as their undergraduate GPA (53%), and 18 percent reported a 3.6 or greater GPA. Although fewer African Americans reported highest undergrad grades when compared with non-URP examinees (41% non-URP with GPA above 3.6 in TY2020), the pipeline is seeing a greater share of African Americans with 3.6 or higher GPA (up from 13% of African Americans in TY2017).
- Nearly 1 in 5 African Americans scored 600 or higher on the GMAT exam (19%) in TY2020—which is a much smaller proportion when compared with non-URP examinees (49% above 600). And, although 19 percent of African Americans scored 500–590 on the GMAT, most achieved a total score of less than 500 (62%).
- About 1 in 5 unique African American GMAT examinees were social science majors (19%), while others majored in engineering (9%), science (6%), and humanities (5%).
- Four in 5 unique African American GMAT examinees (81%) intend to pursue a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, a proportion consistent with non-URP examinees (81%). About 1 in 10 intend to pursue a Master of Accounting degree (10%). Other leading popular degree programs for African Americans include Master of Finance (7%) and joint MBA/Law (8%).

**GMAT® Total Score,
African American Examinees TY2020**



**Undergrad GPA,
African American Examinees TY2020**



Source: GMAC. (2020). GMAT Testing Data.

¹⁴GMAC. (2021, February). Profiles of GMAT™ Testing: North America, TY2016–TY2020. Available at: <https://www.gmac.com/market-intelligence-and-research/assessment-data/profile-of-gmat-candidates>

Note: Testing year 2020 refers to the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. In April 2020 testing centers temporarily closed worldwide as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) precautions, and correspondingly the interim GMAT™ online exam testing appointments were available beginning April 20 through June 15, 2020. Among unique African American examinees, 89% sat for the test in-person and 11% completed the online exam.

Study Formats

When asked about preferred program options, African American prospective students overwhelmingly select a full-time two-year MBA program (31%) or one-year program (15%), while fewer indicate a preference for flexible MBA (7%), online MBA (7%), part-time MBA (5%), or Executive MBA (2%) program types.

- Rather than abandon plans to pursue GME due to COVID-19, slightly more African Americans indicated a willingness to consider the adjustment of online learning than non-underrepresented candidates (32% African Americans vs. 26% non-URP).
- Moreover, if accepted into a program, African Americans reported a willingness to complete online 50 percent (median) of the program due to COVID-19, a much greater proportion compared with an average of only 30 percent for non-URP US respondents.
- Most African Americans selected a preferred delivery method as primarily in person (55%), versus hybrid (25%), primarily online (15%), or undecided (4%). Moreover, the hybrid and online formats were more popular among African Americans when compared with non-URP counterparts.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, most GME programs shifted to online program delivery and continue to fine tune to provide an experience that enables students to share learnings and perspectives with other students, engage in networking, and develop leadership skills in co-curricular activities.^{15, 16}

At the same time, the general popularity of Online MBA programs has the potential to grow—especially as the pandemic reality of work from home is now standard across all industries—and greater importance is placed on demonstrating digital skills in the workforce. When asked to select curriculum "must-have" items if given the chance to design their ideal program, 62 percent of African American prospective students chose business analytics/data science—a course with similar desire among the majority of non-URP candidates (64%).

Other ideal course curriculum more popular among African Americans when compared with non-URP, included: social entrepreneurship/nonprofit (35% vs. 21%), marketing and communications (48% vs. 36%), and entrepreneurship/innovation (52% vs. 42%).

These course preferences are not surprising given the increasing importance of a more inclusive curriculum that offers examples from Black-owned and women-owned businesses and the contributions of immigrants to provide students with an industry advantage. As one business professor asserts: “moving forward, corporations will need new leadership who are trained to understand, recognize, and affirm calls for social justice emerging from the stakeholder ranks, and there will be fierce competition for the alumni of those schools who can provide that kind of strategy and business ethics training.”¹⁷

The flexibility and adjustments noted among some African Americans during the pandemic are noteworthy and suggests a larger trend unfolding, particularly related to technology and curriculum. For example, in the context of a possible decision not to pursue GME, candidates were asked what if any alternative they might take to achieve their goals. The idea of registering for a massive, open online course (MOOC) was considered by 1 in 5 African Americans (20%)—and had similar appeal among non-underrepresented respondents (18%). Professional certification was another popular alternative among African Americans and non-URP counterparts (selected by 28% and 30% of each group). At the same time, those that did not consider any substitutions included 16 percent of African Americans and 13 percent of non-URP candidates.

¹⁵BusinessBecause. (2020, April 7). Wharton MBAs Petition for Lower Tuition Fees. Retrieved on March 17, 2021 from <https://www.businessbecause.com/news/coronavirus-latest/6869/whartonmba-petition-lower-tuition-fees>

¹⁶Byrne, John (2020, April 6). The Student Revolt Over MBA Tuition for Online Classes. Poets & Quants. Retrieved March 17, 2021 from: <https://poetsandquants.com/2020/04/06/the-student-revolt-over-mba-tuition/?pq-category=business-school-news/>

¹⁷Brooker, Jena. (2021, February 11). Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Racial Justice & The B-School Curriculum. Poets & Quants. Retrieved March 26, 2021 from <https://poetsandquants.com/2021/02/11/where-the-rubber-meets-the-road-racial-justice-the-b-school-curriculum/>

Work Experience & Skills

Nearly 4 in 5 unique African American GMAT examinees (79%) have more than one year of work experience. Most have either one to three years' experience (37%) or four to nine years' experience (30%). Twelve percent have 10 or more years' experience.

- A smaller share of unique African American GMAT examinees has less than one year of work experience (20%) compared with non-URP examinees (29%).
- A larger share of unique African American examinees has 10 years or more of work experience (12%) compared with non-URP examinees (7%).

Work experience	African American GMAT examinees	Non-URP GMAT examinees
Less than 1 year	20%	29%
1 to 3 years	37%	36%
4 to 9 years	30%	28%
10 or more years	12%	7%

Source: GMAC. (2020). GMAT Testing Data.

More than half (55%) of African American prospective students surveyed in 2020 reveal that they were prompted to take action on the journey to GME because they had “always planned to do so at this point in their career.” Other top triggers for action among African Americans in 2020 related to career goals in current or future employment, including: a “desire to apply for a job but lacking the required skills and/or degree to be competitive” (38%), and those who realized they “lacked specific knowledge to do my current job” (20%).

Additional factors most often cited by African Americans is the “convenient time to go to school” (38%) and “my children left home, freeing my time” (19%). Although most of the catalysts for a GME journey among African Americans compare closely with those of non-URP survey respondents, exceptions are seen for two monetary viewpoints: “Able to receive tuition assistance at my current job” (11% of African Americans vs. 16% non-URP) and “I have the financial resources to apply” (15% vs. 26%).



Areas of concentration chosen in 2020 offer additional insight into what skills prospects want after their GME studies that they can use on the job or in a new career:

- The five most popular areas of study concentration for African Americans and non-URP respondents include: consulting, finance, business analytics/data science, strategy, and leadership.
- Slightly greater shares of African Americans, when compared with non-URP respondents, were drawn to concentrations such as: marketing (21% African Americans vs. 17% non-URP), nonprofit administration/management (13% vs. 8%), human resources (12% vs. 6%), public administration (11% vs. 6%), and communications and public relations (9% vs. 5%).
- On the other hand, when compared with non-URP respondents, smaller percentages of African Americans indicated interest in areas including: strategy (25% African Americans vs. 34% non-URP), economics (11% vs. 15%), banking (9% vs. 14%), engineering management (4% vs. 8%), and manufacturing and technology (4% vs. 8%).

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demographic changes already underway within the African American talent pipeline by educational achievements, work experience, and gender (see data below and in the demographic profile on page 18) may have major implications for business schools' engagement.

African American examinees “still in undergraduate studies” account for a greater percentage of unique GMAT examinees (21% in FY2020 compared with 16% in FY2017). This suggests that even as the pandemic unfolds this young segment of talent recognize the value of GME and yet likely face greater support needs to secure training opportunities such as internships, work partnerships, and job networking when compared with previous cohorts of African American talent. External data indicate the pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by women in general, signaled by 2020 survey reports of taking side jobs for supplemental income, experiencing feelings of burnout, as well as declining career ambition.¹⁸ African American women likely face additional challenges, as jobs data for February 2021 noted “greater unemployment rates for black women (8.9%) when compared with women overall (5.9%).”¹⁹

By gender, women accounted for 47 percent of the African American GMAT examinee pipeline in FY2020 (compared with 49% African American women in FY2019), data indicating a move further

away from the gender parity African American women previously held with male counterparts for the past several GMAT testing years.

This suggests an opportunity for schools to share information about their available support mechanisms that may especially resonate with and reassure women (like backup childcare services, mental health resources, or mentorships) as tools to help balance demands of obligations at home with that of school or work. The business school community has some entrée to these conversations as industry giant Goldman Sachs in March 2021 released a study on “Black Womenomics” to quantify the gender and racial biases that Black women face and partnered with Black women-led organizations to better understand the barriers. Plus, the company launched a new initiative called “One Million Black Women” to focus on areas such as access to capital, job creation, financial health, and workforce advancement.²⁰

GMAC survey data note that only 6 percent of African Americans are prompted to consider GME during their first year in the workplace, compared with 7 percent of non-URP counterparts. To accelerate structured career advancement, in 2020 the Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) organization launched the MLT Black Equity at Work Certification, a first-of-its-kind clear and comprehensive standard for employers committed to achieving Black equity. The Certification (a three-year initial plan followed by annual review) provides a roadmap, support, and recognition necessary to enable and encourage employers across the United States (like Amazon, Boston Consulting Group, Nike, and other industry leaders) to pursue Black equity with the same rigor and results applied to other key business priorities.²¹

¹⁸Connley, Courtney. (2021, March 9). Women's ambition plummeted during the coronavirus pandemic, as careers stalled and burnout spiked. CNBC. Retrieved March 15, 2021 from <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/09/65percent-of-working-women-say-pandemic-has-made-things-worse-at-work.html>

¹⁹Connley, Courtney. (2021, March 5). unemployment rate understates what's going on, expert says, as millions of women remain out of workforce. Retrieved March 15, 2021 from <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/03/05/unemployment-rate-understates-whats-going-on-especially-for-women.html>

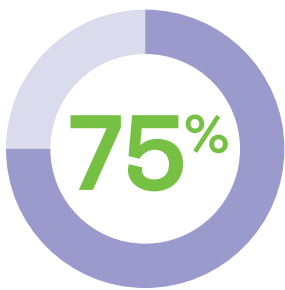
²⁰Goldman Sachs. (2021, March 9). Black Womenomics: Investing in the Underinvested. Retrieved March 15, 2021 from <https://www.goldmansachs.com/insights/pages/black-womenomics-report-summary.html>

²¹Management Leadership for Tomorrow. (2021, February 17). Management Leadership for Tomorrow (MLT) Announces Inaugural Cohort of Twenty-Five Industry Leading Employers That Will Pursue Pathbreaking MLT Black Equity at Work Certification. Retrieved April 15, 2021 from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/management-leadership-for-tomorrow-mlt-announces-inaugural-cohort-of-twenty-five-industry-leading-employers-that-will-pursue-pathbreaking-mlt-black-equity-at-work-certification-301229564.html>

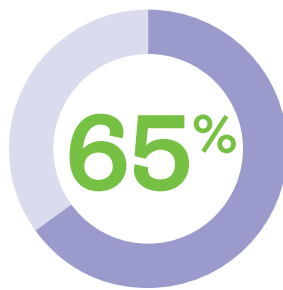
Financing Plans

African American business school candidates are traditionally more likely than non-URP candidates to plan to use grants, fellowships, and scholarships, as well as loans to finance their graduate management education.

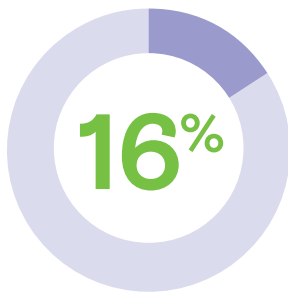
In addition, African Americans are less likely to plan on parental support or use personal earnings or savings than non-URP peers. This is consistent with 2020 survey data, as:



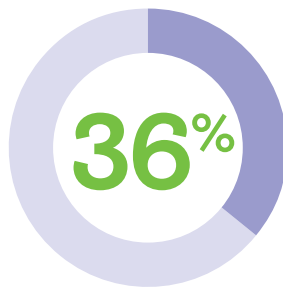
3 in 4 African American business school candidates plan to use grants, fellowships, and/or scholarships (75%) to pay for business school. By comparison, 55 percent of non-URP candidates plan to use these funding sources.



Nearly two-thirds of African American business school candidates (65%) plan to take out student loans, compared with more than half of non-URP candidates (53%).



A third of non-URP candidates (34%) plan on receiving financial support from their parents to help pay for graduate business school. By comparison, only 16 percent of African American candidates plan on receiving parental financial support.



African American candidates are less likely than non-URP candidates to plan to use personal savings (36% African American vs. 51% non-URP), personal earnings (44% vs. 46%), and employer sponsorship (23% vs. 27%) to finance their degree.



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the financial concerns as a barrier to entry were more prevalent among African Americans in 2020 compared with non-URP prospective students.

Past survey data has shown that African Americans express greater concern about funding when compared with non-URP candidates. In a COVID-19 era of general uncertainty, financial obstacles that may actually prevent African Americans from pursuing GME are cited more often when compared with non-URP respondents, including: cost of the program (30% African Americans vs. 22% non-URP), future debt burden (25% vs. 20%), current debt level (14% vs. 8%), and current uncertainty of the economy (12% vs. 9%).

The National Black MBA Association (NMBAA[®]) established a COVID-19 Relief Fund in early August 2020 as a resource for emergency funding to cover students' basic needs as well as educational expenses and technology requirements necessitated by virtual learning.²² And, in 2020 NMBAA awarded more than USD\$100,000 for undergraduate and graduate student scholarships, with an unprecedented number of investing corporate sponsors.²³

Schools can look to encourage African American prospective students to apply for scholarships available from these groups and other partner organizations. Additionally, they can be flexible with deadlines for admissions and financial aid to give more students the chance to apply, as well as being proactive about helping students fill out federal aid applications.²⁴

²²NMBAA. (2020, August 3). National Black MBA Association[®] Announces Launch Of NMBAA[®] COVID-19 Relief Fund, Retrieved March 17, 2021 from <https://nmbaa.org/national-black-mba-association-announces-launch-of-nmbaa-covid-19-relief-fund/>

²³NMBAA. (2020, October 1). NMBAA[®] Announces 2020 Corporate Scholarship Recipients. Retrieved March 17, 2021 from <http://nmbaa-indy.org/projects/nmbaa-announces-2020-corporate-scholarship-recipients/>

²⁴Poohle, Allison. (2021, March 16) Is It Harder to Get into College in 2021? The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved March 17, 2021 from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/is-it-harder-to-get-into-college-in-2021-11615918281>

Population and Geography

Measurements of pipeline data may appear distorted when compared with previous years, as standardized testing centers temporarily closed around the globe in spring 2020 due to coronavirus (COVID-19) precautions and correspondingly many students had tests cancelled or postponed before the transition to an online GMAT exam was implemented.

The lack of consistency in $\tau\tau2020$ figures is further intensified by the quick adjustments of schools to maintain business continuity and altering their usage of the GMAT exam—for example, allowing applicants to request test waivers, accepting an alternative test (e.g., GMAC's Executive Assessment Online exam launched early May 2020), modifying requirements to become test optional, or simply not requiring a test for the 2020-2021 school year.²⁵

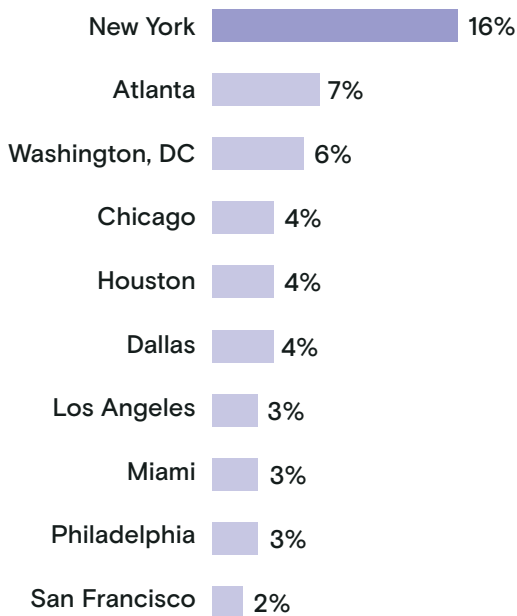
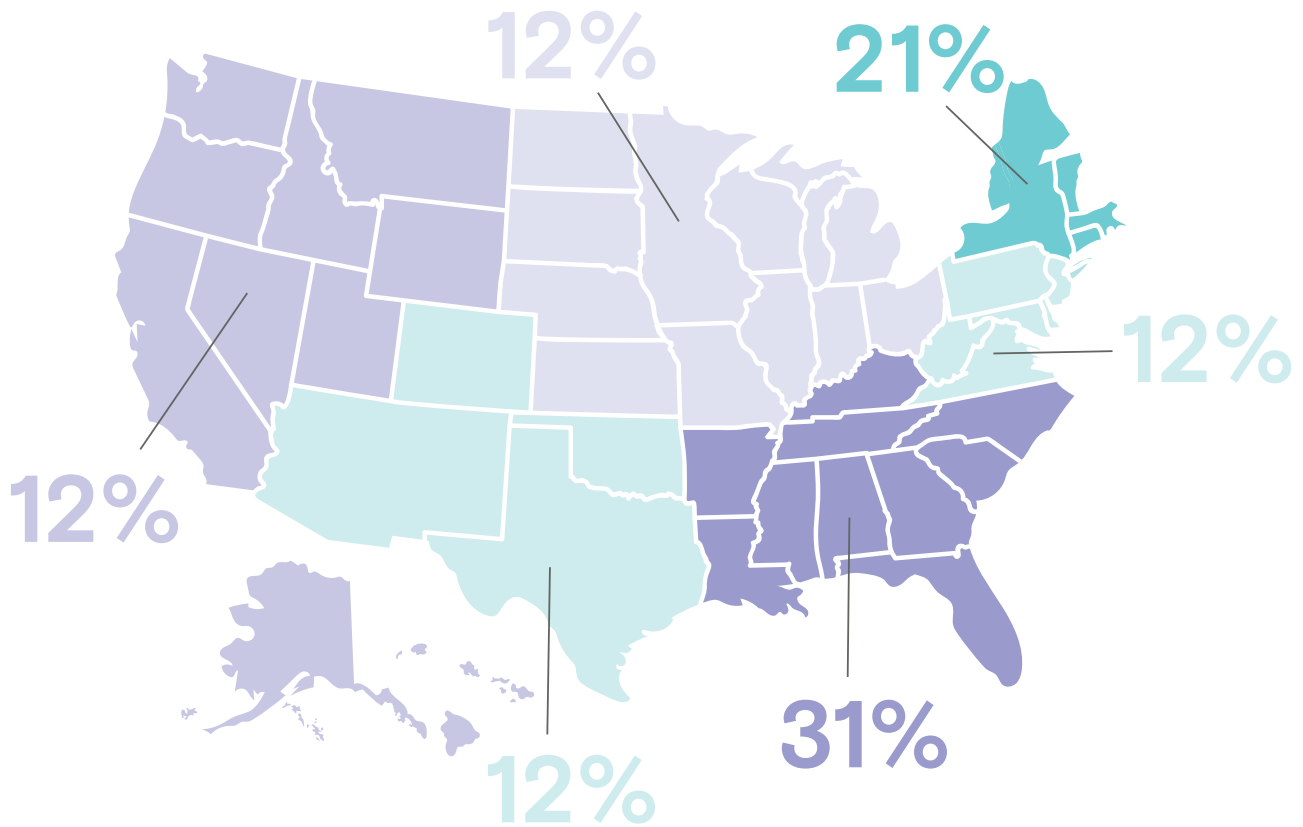
African Americans in $\tau\tau2020$ are the second largest (URP) group in the US graduate management education pipeline.

- Among unique African American GMAT examinees, 53 percent identify as men and 47 percent identify as women.
- Four in 5 unique African American GMAT examinees (81%) are 30 years old or younger. Within this age segment, about equal shares are younger than 25 (40%) and between the ages of 25 and 30 (41%).



²⁵Blackman, Stacey. (2020, December 14). Standardized Tests for Business School. Stacy Blackman Consulting. Retrieved March 17, 2021 from <https://www.stacyblackman.com/standardized-tests-for-business-school/>

Unique African American GMAT™ Examinees, by Residence for US Regions and Metro Areas



By US region of residence, the South has the largest percentage of unique African American GMAT examinees (31%). Large representations of African American examinees are also in the Northeast (21%), followed by equivalent distributions (each 12%) across the West, Southwest, Midwest, and Middle Atlantic regions.

By US metropolitan area, the greatest representation of unique African American GMAT examinees were in New York (16% in TY2020, up from 12% in TY2017). Other areas with large representations of African American examinees remain consistent: Atlanta (7%), Washington, DC (6%), Chicago, Houston, and Dallas (each 4%). The Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro area is a notable inclusion in the top 10 metro areas for African Americans when compared with leading metro areas for Non-URP US examinees.

Source: GMAC. (2020). GMAT Testing Data.

Demographic Profile

Presented below is demographic data for the unique US citizen GMAT examinees in TY2020 who self-identified as Black or African American and reside in the United States. Examinees are not required to provide biographical and demographic information. **Bold** indicates the largest group within each data series.

GMAT® Exam Testing Year 2020, African Americans, Unique GMAT® Examinees

Gender

- Women: 47%
- **Men: 53%**

Age range

- Younger than 25: 40%
- **25–30: 41%**
- 31–39: 14%
- 40 and older: 5%

US region

- Middle Atlantic: 12%
- Midwest: 12%
- Northeast: 21%
- **South: 31%**
- Southwest: 12%
- West: 12%

Years of work experience

- Less than 1 year: 20%
- **1–3 years: 37%**
- 4–9 years: 30%
- 10 or more years: 12%

Highest education level attained

- Still an undergraduate: 21%
- **Earned bachelor's degree: 67%**
- Taken graduate courses beyond first degree: 5%
- Earned master's degree: 6%
- Earned doctorate: 1%

Undergraduate major category

- **Business and commerce: 53%**
- Social science: 19%
- Science: 6%
- Engineering: 9%
- Humanities: 5%
- Other major: 8%

Undergraduate GPA

- 2.9 or below: 28%
- **3.0–3.5: 53%**
- 3.6 or above: 18%

Total GMAT score

- **Below 500: 62%**
- 500–540: 10%
- 550–590: 9%
- 600–640: 8%
- 650–690: 5%
- 700 and above: 5%

Intended degree program

- **Master of Business Administration (MBA): 81%**
- Executive MBA: 5%
- Master of Accountancy: 10%
- Master of Analytics/Business Intelligence: 6%
- Master of Business/IT: 3%
- Master of Entrepreneurship: 4%
- Master of Finance: 7%
- Master in Health Care Administration: 3%
- Master of Human Resources: 3%
- Master of Management: 3%
- Master of Marketing/Communication: 5%
- Master of Public Administration: 2%
- Various other degrees MS/MA: 14%
- Joint degree, MBA/engineering: 2%
- Joint degree, MBA/law: 8%
- Other joint degree: 2%
- Doctorate in business: 5%
- Other specific degree: 1%
- Undecided: 1%

Source: GMAC. (2020). GMAT Testing Data.

Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. Data from 2,982 unique US citizens who self-identified as Black or African American.

Contributors

The following individuals from GMAC made significant contributions to the publication of this report:

Michelle Sparkman Renz, Consultant lead author, literature review, and manuscript review; Devina Caruthers, Manager, Research, data facilitation and preparation; Tacoma Williams, Associate Manager, Research Operations, data facilitation and preparation; Rachel Nana, Consultant, Data Science, data preparation; Tania Hernandez-Andersen, Senior Director, Corporate Brand, manuscript review; Sabrina White, Vice President, School and Industry Engagement, manuscript review, editorial review.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to other individuals at the Graduate Management Admission Council for providing additional support and peer review.

Contact Information

For questions or comments regarding this brief, please contact GMAC at industryengagement@gmac.com.

Diversity Insights 2021 report is a product of GMAC, an association of leading graduate business schools worldwide. Founded in 1953, we are committed to creating solutions for business schools and candidates to better discover, evaluate, and connect with each other. We work on behalf of the schools and the graduate management education community, as well as guide candidates on their journey to higher education, to ensure that no talent goes undiscovered. GMAC provides world-class research, professional development opportunities, and assessments for the industry, designed to advance the art and science of admissions. Owned and administered by GMAC, the Graduate Management Admission Test™ (GMAT™) exam is the most widely used graduate business school assessment, recognized by more than 7,000 programs worldwide. Other GMAC assessments include the NMAT by GMAC™ (NMAT™) exam, for entrance into graduate management programs in India and 10 other countries, and the Executive Assessment, specifically designed for executive programs around the world. GMAC is a global organization with offices in Hong Kong, China; Gurugram, India; Singapore; London, United Kingdom; and the United States. To learn more about our work, please visit www.gmac.com.



No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of GMAC. For permission, contact the GMAC legal department at legal@gmac.com.

GMAT®, Graduate Management Admission Council®, and Graduate Management Admission Test® are registered trademarks of GMAC in the United States and other countries. NBMBA® is a registered trademark of The National Black MBA Association, a nonprofit professional member-based organization. This document is a product of the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), a nonprofit organization of 228 leading graduate business schools from around the world actively committed to advancing the art and science of admissions. GMAC™ provides world-class research, industry conferences, recruiting tools, and assessments for the graduate management education industry, as well as tools, resources, events, and services that help guide candidates through their higher education journey. Owned and administered by GMAC, the Graduate Management Admission Test™ (GMAT™) exam is the most widely used graduate business school assessment; GMAC™ also owns and administers the NMAT by GMAC™ (NMAT™) exam and the Executive Assessment (EA). BusinessBecause and The MBA Tour are subsidiaries of GMAC™, a global organization with offices in China, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States.